

## **What is Influenza?**

This fall we expect to encounter two types of influenza in our communities – seasonal influenza, the usual flu that circulates in our communities each fall and winter, and a new influenza virus, H1N1 (Swine flu) first identified last April. Both can cause illness varying in severity from mild to severe. Symptoms are similar and include: fever (over 100 degrees F or more), sore throat, cough, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and, with H1N1flu, vomiting and diarrhea along with the respiratory symptoms may be present.

## **What can I do to lessen the spread of the flu?**

Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You can also use a waterless hand cleaner. Always wash hands after coughing or sneezing and before eating.

Cover nose and mouth with tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash after it has been used. If you don't have a tissue available, cough into your elbow or sleeve rather than your hand.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, as germs are spread this way.

Avoid contact with individuals who have flu symptoms.

**STAY HOME WHEN YOU ARE SICK!** Anyone with flu like symptoms should stay home for at least 24 hours after they are free of fever, or signs of fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications.

## **What is the Seasonal Influenza Vaccine?**

This is the vaccine that protects against the usual flu that circulates in our community each winter. We strongly encourage **every one** to be vaccinated against seasonal influenza. It is especially important for the very young, pregnant women, people with certain medical conditions and those over 50 years of age to be protected from this form of influenza. Affecting up to 40 million people nationwide, seasonal influenza and its complications are also responsible for 36,000 deaths and 200,000 hospitalizations every year. Seasonal influenza vaccine will be in abundant supply this year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is urging all providers to administer seasonal influenza vaccine early this year. The vaccine will continue to protect people from seasonal influenza throughout the normal flu season. Seasonal Influenza vaccine will be available through the Health Department or your health care provider.

## **How is H1N1 Influenza different from seasonal influenza?**

The new influenza virus that began circulating last spring continued throughout the summer. This disease has affected young people, children and college age people at far greater rates than older adults. Those over 65 years of age may have some immunity built up from being exposed to similar viruses in the past.

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Pregnant women, very young children and people with chronic medical conditions, like asthma, heart disease and diabetes, are more likely to develop severe illness than the average adult. Bacterial infections at the same time or after the flu infections can lead to pneumonia, ear infections or sinus infections.

### **Is there a vaccine to protect from the H1N1 Influenza?**

H1N1 Influenza vaccine is being tested and developed now and expected to be released as it becomes available beginning later this fall. Since it is expected to be available in limited quantities initially the following groups will be given the vaccine first: pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, all people 6 months through 24 years of age, healthcare and emergency services personnel, and people aged 25 through 64 years of age who have medical conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza. Once the demand for vaccine for these priority groups has been met everyone aged 25 to 64 years of age will be offered the vaccine. As vaccine supply and demand for vaccine among younger groups is met the vaccine will be offered to people 65 years and older. The H1N1 vaccine is **not** meant to replace the seasonal flu vaccine – it is intended to be used in addition to seasonal flu vaccine to protect people.

### **How do I care for a sick person at home?**

Check with your medical care provider about any special care needed for a person who is pregnant or who has a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma or emphysema.

Keep the sick person away from others as much as possible. **DO NOT GO TO WORK OR SCHOOL WHILE ILL.**

Stay home for at least 24 hours after fever is gone, except to seek medical care (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medication).

**Do not give aspirin to children or teenagers.** This can cause a rare but serious illness called Reyes syndrome. Children 5 years of age and older and teens can take medicines **without** aspirin, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Nuprin) to relieve symptoms. Read the label of any over the counter cold and flu medications to be sure they don't contain aspirin or additional doses of medications already being given such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Check with your health care provider before giving children under the age

of 4 any over the counter cold medications. The safest care for flu symptoms in children under two years of age is using a cool-mist humidifier and a suction bulb to help clear away mucus.

Get plenty of rest.

Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.

Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands.

Throw used tissues in the trash.

Be watchful for emergency warning signs that might indicate the need to seek medical attention.

### **Seek Emergency Care:**

If a **child** experiences any of the following:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

In **adults**, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough



The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department will be conducting seasonal flu clinics on **Saturday, September 19<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon at the Kingsford Middle School (walk-in clinic/no appointment necessary) and on Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>**

**from 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. at the Elks Club in Iron River. At the Iron River clinic an appointment is required.** Please call 265-4150 to schedule an appointment.